

How to Talk to Faculty

As advisors we often encourage students to talk with their instructors.

We know that talking with a faculty member can seem intimidating – especially for new students. Veteran students can feel that nervous twinge, too. The guidelines below appeared in a *National On-Campus Report* article called, “Helping New Students Make the Most of Meetings with Faculty,” (1993). We hope you find the information helpful.

Step 1: Make an appointment.

- ✚ Review the syllabus for your instructor’s office hours. Go to his or her office during those hours.
- ✚ If you’re uncertain of your instructor’s office hours, ask for them.
- ✚ If your schedule conflicts with the office hours, tell your instructor why you can’t make the scheduled office hours. Then tell him/her about your specific concern.
- ✚ Set up a specific time to meet with your instructor. Be sure to indicate the amount of time you think you’ll need.

Step 2: Establish rapport.

- ✚ Be on time for your appointment.
- ✚ When you arrive be pleasant, smile, introduce yourself again (include your name and class), and shake hands if appropriate.

Step 3: Present your concern.

- ✚ Focus on the specific questions you’ve identified as problematic.
- ✚ Have your question(s) or problem(s) written out so that the instructor can see where your difficulties are.

Step 4: Provide background information.

- ✚ Briefly tell your instructor about your high school background and preparation for the course – if relevant to solving the problem.
- ✚ Explain the study strategies you’ve used to understand the material.

Step 5: Redirect for clarification.

- ✚ If the instructor’s explanation isn’t clear, redirect his/her attention to the specific point where you became confused.

✚ “Talk through” your problem so that the instructor hears your reasoning.

Step 6: Summarize resolution of the problem.

✚ “I was missing this step in...I need to apply this formula...”

Step 7: Thank your instructor.

✚ And ask to come back if necessary.